Appl. No. 09/708,883
Amdt. dated November 29, 2004
Reply to Office Action of July 27, 2004

PATENT

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

--The present application claims priority from the following applications, the entire disclosures of which are herein incorporated by reference for all purposes:

(1) the present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. 09/611,375, entitled "Providing Stamps On Secure Paper Using A Communications Network," filed July 7, 2000, now abandoned;

(2) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/216,779, entitled "System And Method Of Printing Labels," filed July 7, 2000;

(3) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/216,653, entitled "Method And System For Dispensing Postage Over The Internet, With Enhanced Postal Security Features" filed July 7, 2000;

(4) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/206,207, entitled "Providing Stamps on Secure Paper Using A Communications Network" filed May 22, 2000;

(5) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/204,357, entitled "Stamps Over a Communications Network" filed May 15, 2000;

(6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/181,299, entitled "System and Method For Stamps Over The Internet," filed February 9, 2000;

(7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/181,368, entitled "System and Method For Stamps Over The Internet," filed February 8, 2000;

(8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/165,885, entitled "System And Method For Managing Multiple Postage Functions In A Single Account," filed November 16, 1999; and

(9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/164,639, entitled "System and Method For Dispensing Postage Over The Internet, With Enhanced Postal Security Features," filed November 10, 1999.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 5 with the following amended paragraph:

--The disclosure of the following U.S. Patent Application is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety for all purposes:

(1) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. 09/358,801, entitled "Method And Apparatus For Postage Label Authentication," filed July 21, 1999, now U.S. patent 6,701,304.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 10 with the following amended paragraph:

--The following patent applications, including the present application, are being filed concurrently, and the disclosure of each other application is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety for all purposes:

(1) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. __/___,___, entitled "Techniques For Dispensing Postage Using A Communication Network" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-022320US);

([[2]]1) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. __/___,___, 09/708,975, entitled "Method Of Distributing Postage Label Sheets With Security Features" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-025510US);

([[3]]2) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. __/___,___, 09/708,913, entitled "Method And Apparatus For Providing Postage Indicia Over A Data Communication Network" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-025400US);

([[4]]3) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. __/___,___, 09/708,698, entitled "System And Method For Managing Multiple Postage Functions In A Single Account" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-021210US);

([[5]]4) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. __/___,___, 09/708,792, entitled "Targeted Advertisement Using A Security Feature On A Postage Medium" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-025520US);

Appl. No. 09/708,883
Amdt. dated November 29, 2004
Reply to Office Action of July 27, 2004

PATENT

([[6]]5) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. —/___,___,09/708,185, entitled "System And Method Of Printing Labels" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-025610US); and

([[7]]6) U.S. Non-Provisional Patent Application No. —/___,___,09/708,971, entitled "Providing Stamps On Secure Paper Using A Communications Network" (Attorney Docket No. 006969-022220US).--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 33 with the following amended paragraph:

--The present invention provides techniques for dispensing postage using a communication network such as the Internet. Fig. 1 is a simplified block diagram of a distributed computer network 100 which may incorporate an embodiment of the present invention. Computer network 100 includes one or more user computer systems 104-1 and 104-2[[,]] (hereinafter referred to generically as user system 104), at least one postage vendor system (PVS) 102, and a postal authority system (PAS) 106 coupled to a communication network 108 via a plurality of communication links 110. User systems 104 may optionally be coupled to one or more printers 112 or other like printing devices, and other peripheral devices (not shown) such as a weighing scale.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 7 with the following amended paragraph:

--Communication network 108 provides a mechanism for allowing the various components of distributed network 100 to communicate and exchange information with each other. Communication network 108 may itself be comprised of many interconnected computer systems and communication links. Communication links [[18]]108 may be hardwire links, optical links, satellite or other wireless communications links, wave propagation links, or any other mechanisms for communication of information. While in one embodiment communication network 108 is the Internet, in other embodiments, communication network 108 may be any suitable computer network. Distributed computer network 100 depicted in Fig. 1 is merely illustrative of an embodiment incorporating the present invention and does not limit the scope of

the invention as recited in the claims. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize other

variations, modifications, and alternatives. For example, more than one PVS 102 may be

coupled to communication network 108. Further, one or more printers 112 may optionally be

coupled to a single user system 104, or alternatively a plurality of user systems 104 may share

one or more common printers. Other devices such as weighing machines for weighing mail

pieces, fax machines, scanners, etc. may also be coupled to user systems 104.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 10, line 15 with the following amended

paragraph:

--As stated above, a user may use user system 104 to browse or interact with web

pages provided by PVS 102. These web pages may be stored by one or more web servers of

PVS 102 and may be accessed by users of user system 104 via a browser program executing on

user system 104. Examples of browser programs include the ~~Internet Explorer~~ Internet

Explorer™ browser program provided by Microsoft™ ~~Microsoft~~ Corporation, the ~~Netscape~~

~~Navigator~~ Netscape Navigator™ browser provided by Netscape™ ~~Netscape~~ Communications

Corporation, and others. In the Internet and World Wide Web (the "Web") environment, the

web pages may be written in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and may incorporate any

combination of text, graphics, audio and video content, software programs, and other data. Web

pages may also contain hypertext links to other web pages. Each web page is uniquely identified

by an address called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that enables users to access the web

page. Users may access web pages by providing URL information to the browser, either directly

or indirectly, and in response, a web page corresponding to the user-specified URL is

downloaded from a server coupled to communication network 108 to the requesting user

computer 104. The downloaded web page may then be viewed by the user using the browser.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 26, line 7 with the following amended

paragraph:

--According to an embodiment of the present invention, web server 702 maintains a list of all PSDM servers 704 coupled to local communication network 710. For example, a list of available PSDM servers 704 may be stored in the registry of the Windows NT™ operating system provided by Microsoft™ Corporation ~~Windows NT registry of~~ for web server 702. A system administrator may add or remove PSDM servers using a ~~Windows NT~~ Windows NT™ operating system registry editor. According to another embodiment, a proxy software (e.g. C++) class may be provided which stores a list of the available PSDM servers 704. Information related to PSDM servers 704 may also be stored in database 708. Web server 702 may then use an allocation scheme such as a round-robin scheme to distribute the work. For example, if there are two PSDM servers available, web server 702 will alternate sending the tasks of generating information for printing the indicium to the two PSDM servers. According to this embodiment, if the user has requested the purchase of two US$0.33 stamps, the task of generating information for printing the indicium for the first US$0.33 stamp will be allocated to the first PSDM server, and the task of generating information for printing an indicium for the second US$0.33 stamp will be allocated to the second PSDM server. In this manner, web server 702 makes optimal use of available PSDM servers 704. It should be apparent that various other allocations schemes/algorithms may also be used by web server 702.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 33, line 16 with the following amended paragraph:

--Fig. 9 depicts relationships between the AR and DR values of the GPSD resource and the MPSD resources. As shown in Fig. 9, funds 900 may be purchased from postal authority 106 and added to the DR value 904 of the GPSD resource. The summation of the AR 902 and DR 904 values of the GPSD resource indicate the total funds purchased from the postal authority (see Equation (1) below). The funds may then used to fund the individual MPSD resources in order to prepare them for generating information for printing indicia. Each time a MPSD resource is funded for a particular amount, the AR value 902 of the GPSD resource is increased by the particular amount and the DR value 904 of the GPSD resource is decreased by the particular amount. The particular amount is added to the DR value 908 of the MPSD

resource being funded. The summation of the <u>ARs 906-1, 906-2, 906-3, 906-4, 906-n</u>

<u>(hereinafter referred to generically as ARs 906)</u> ~~ARs 906~~ and <u>DRs 908-1, 908-2, 908-3, 908-4,</u>

<u>908-n (hereinafter referred to generically as DRs 908)</u> ~~DRs 908~~ of the individual MPSD

resources equals the AR value 902 of the GPSD resource (see Equation (2) below). Each time an

MPSD resource generates information for printing an indicium for a stamp, the value of the

stamp is deducted from the MPSD resource's DR value 908 and added to the MPSD resource's

AR value 906. A single MPSD resource may be used to generate information for printing indicia

for a plurality of stamp requests received from a plurality of users. Accordingly, the present

invention allows an AR/DR pair associated with a MPSD resource to be shared between a

plurality of users. The following equations provide mathematical representations of the

relationships:

$$GPSD[AR] + GPSD[DR] = \sum_{i=1}^{k} USPS\ Fund_i \quad \text{---- Equation (1)}$$

$$GPSD[AR] = \sum_{i=1}^{n} MPSD_i[AR] + MPSD_i[DR] \quad \text{---- Equation (2) --}$$